

New York City Cancellations

Used on Banknote Postage Dues

I am unaware of any comprehensive study of the cancellations used on dues in New York City, thus this exhibit examines the chronological history of cancellations used on banknote postage dues from 1879 to 1894. It does not pursue random uses of a variety of common cancellations used on regular stamps or as auxiliary handstamps. Thus, station duplexes (ellipses), receiving handstamps, or provisional precancels are not shown.

It begins with a short-lived quarter cork cancel which was undoubtedly an experiment in precancellation, which morphed into a dedicated program with a distinctive cancellation.

The New York Pearl is probably the most recognized cancel in banknote postage dues, primarily because of the high volume use in the largest post office in America. These cancels were applied by a one directional hand roller, thus creating a variety of orientations for study, including inverts, verticals, and multiples. Adding to interest is the use of two different color inks.

During the same time period the main post office and stations used double ovals. There are several styles of cancels and like the pearls came in two colors.

The post office finally, in mid-1894, moved to a duplex cancel which had a large fine lined grid.

Quarter Cork - Blue
Pearl -Black
Pearl - Blue
Double Oval PO
Double Oval Stations
Double Oval UD
MI & R Duplex

This exhibit will follow the list at left

New York City Cancellations

Blue Quarter Cork



Almost nothing is known about this cancel. Roger Curran has found a cover, used in late July 1879, which confirmed the cancel was in fact a precancel. It is only known in the same color blue ink which was then currently used at the New York main post office. It is only found on the low values, as the high values were not issued until 19 September, after the post office began use of the Pearl precancel. In a census over the last four years, it was found there are far more 5 cent dues with this cancel than other values. The 1 cent due is very scarce.

New York City Cancellations

Pearls - Black



The New York Pearl cancellation device was a fancy design of a monogrammed vertical "N" and an overlaid, horizontal "Y", pointing left, encircled by small solid circles, subsequently called "pearls" by philatelists.

Sometime about 1 August 1879, the New York Post Office began use of this device. Initially the post office used black ink, but by late September or early October began using blue ink. Even though the latest known use was 7 October, it could have been a late use of previously canceled sheets.

Noticeably missing is the 10 cent high value. Even though the high values (10, 30 & 50 cents) were issued on 19 September, the post office canceled enough to be available, except the 10 cent. The 10 cent is very rare. I propose the following theory why it is not available.

A census over the last 4 years indicates there are large numbers of the 5 cent dues precanceled in black, which dated prior to the release of the high values. Thus there was not much demand for the 10 value immediately following its issuance. Thus for the high values, 10 cents, 30 cents, and 50 cents, there was only a small window of use from 19 September to 7 Oct of black precancels.

New York City Cancellations

Pearls - Blue

Brown



Red-Brown



In late September or early October the post office changed the color of the ink used to the then currently used blue. The post office used this device and color ink until sometime about May 1887, when they stopped their precancelation program on postage dues.

Since the device spanned many years, it included both brown and red-brown colors, except the 3 cent. Bower made a compelling argument why there are no blue pearls found on the 3 cent. When the rate changed on 1 October 1883, there was a reduction in use of 3 cent dues, which was compounded by a subsequent rate reduction on 1 June 1885. Thus the New York post office was left with rather large quantities of the 3 cent due, and had no reason to continue precanceling these stamps. see the page with blue double ovals for continuation in narrative.

New York City Cancellations

Pearls - Orientations

Vertical Orientations



Double Impressions



Black Vertical



Blue Vertical



Black Horizontal



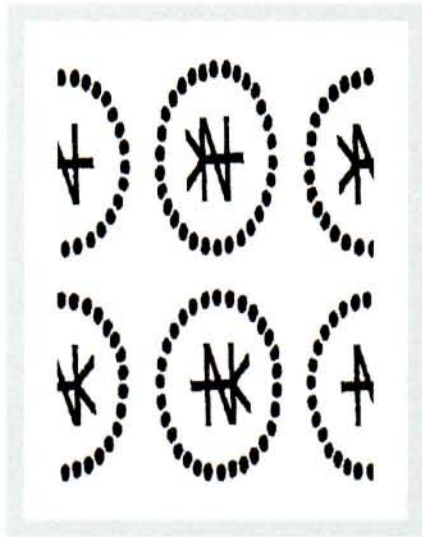
Blue Horizontal

Writing in the late 1970's, Bower believed there were only about 25 examples of pearls in a vertical orientation. Based on my census for the last four years, the estimate is a little low, but certainly these precancels are scarce.

Slightly more common are the multiple impressions.

New York City Cancellations

Pearls - Varieties



Left and right
Orientation



Diagonal



Skidded



Double impression
pointing right and down



These are previously unreported varieties.

New York City Cancellations

Pearls - Covers



16 September 1879 advertised letter, unclaimed. Black Pearl precancel.



August 1883 double weight, short paid 3 cents. Blue Pearl precancel.

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval Main Post Office - Black

Style I



Style II



Large

Style III



Style IV



Large

Style V



- Style I - complete bar below PO
- Style II - gap in bar below PO
- Style III - numeral 1 inserted in gap
- Style IV - numeral 2 inserted in gap
- Style V numeral 3 inserted in gap

The ovals with "PO" in the inner oval, are thought to have been used at the main post office. Like the station letter ovals, they are known used as early as 1879 and continued throughout the period. They are only known in black ink. Also like the station letter ovals, some of these come in a large and small size.

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval Main Post Office - Blue

Brown



Red-Brown



The latest known use of the Pearl precancel is 24 May 1887. The earliest Blue PO ovals are recorded from May 1887, so it is possible there was some overlap in useage.

It should be noted in Bower's analysis of New York post office handling of 3 cent dues during the rates changes in 1883 and 1885, the post office, after exhausting the stock of pearls in the various denominations in early 1887, began using all remaining stocks of brown due stamps before using the new red-brown stamps.

The blue cancels are known used from late May 1887 to late September 1887.

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Double Oval Main Post Office Covers



UPU letter from London short paid 15 centimes. Large style IV black double oval cancel.



Undelivered circular returned to sender postage due 1 cent. Blue double oval cancel.

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval Stations A-K



Large



Large



Large



Large



Double oval cancels were only used on non-first class matter. In 1935 Gilbert Burr wrote a series of articles detailing these cancels, and found there was basically two types, a large size and a small size. He further determined the large size was used before 1883 and contemporaneously with the smaller size and only by a few stations.

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval Stations L- Misc



Large



Large



Large



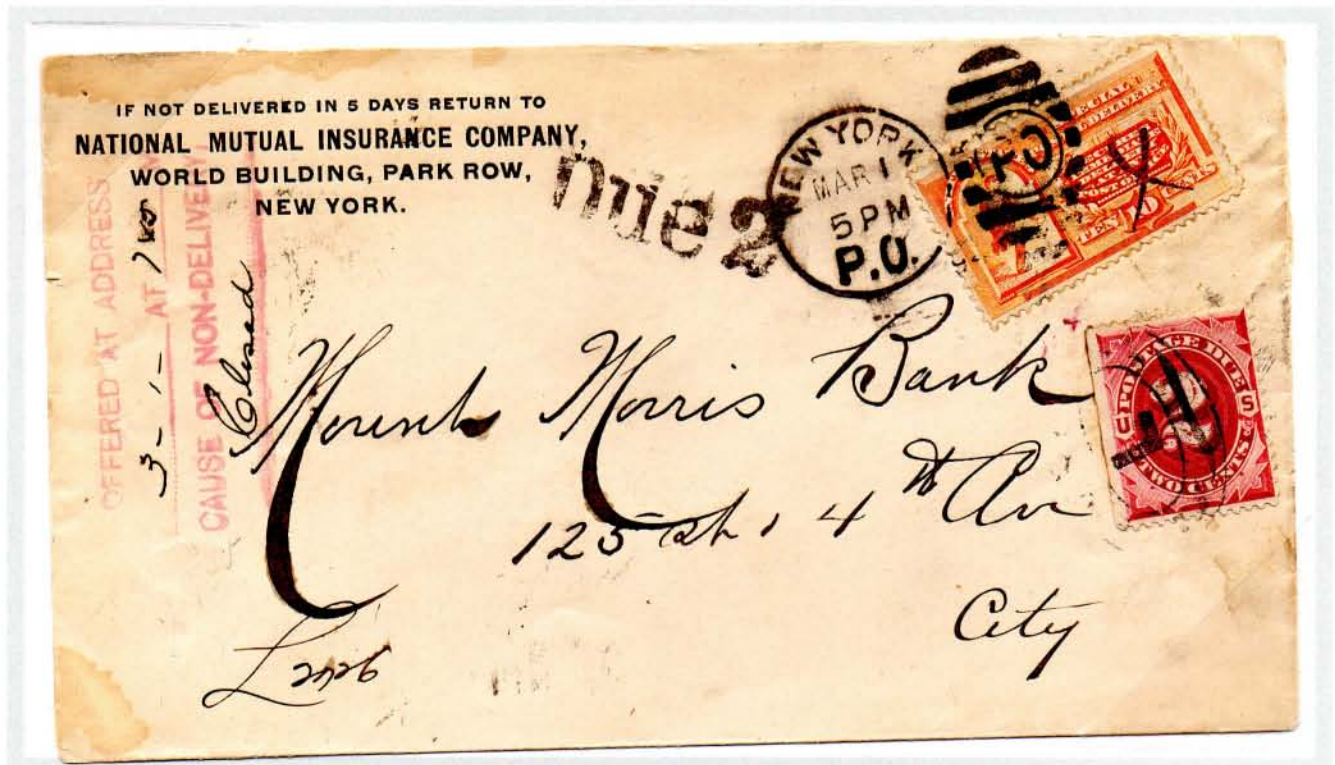
The stations designated A-L had been in operation before 1879. Stations R and S began operations in 1881 and 1882, while station P began in 1886 and station O in 1890. Stations V and Madison Square were late use ovals. Even though the double oval cancels are known used as early as 1879, they were used long after 1894. There is only one style and only black cancels are known.

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval Stations Covers



December 1883 letter from Philadelphia double weight, short paid one rate, Station "L".



March 1894 special delivery local letter unpaid single rate Station L

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval UD - Black



It is still unknown what "UD" stands for, but it was used from 1879 through 1894. It comes with thick letters and thin letters. It was used on all mail matter.



May 1894 UPU letter from Liverpool short paid 15 centimes.

New York City Cancellations

Double Oval UD - Blue



The use of blue ink with the "UD" double oval cancel is relatively scarce. When found, it is usually dated in early 1880's.



April 1882 UPU postal card from London short paid 5 centimes.

New York City Cancellations

MI & R Duplex



It is thought the letters "MI & R" means "money", "inquiry", and "return". Based on covers seen, no correlation has been found. The New York post office began use of this duplex cancel about July 1894 and continued use for several more years.



September 1894 UPU letter from Italy short paid full single rate, 25 centimes.